

We claim:

1. A method for using a computer system to effectuate an action related to a cause comprising:
 - a) identifying a cause;
 - b) identifying an entity capable of performing an action related to the cause;
 - c) identifying a price for the action;
 - d) specifying, via a computer system, a deadline for receiving pledges earmarked for the cause;
 - e) receiving, via a computer system, before the deadline, a plurality of pledges of value units earmarked for the cause; and
 - f) providing consideration to the entity in exchange for performance of the action, where the consideration comprises value units pledged in step e.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
 - entering an agreement with the entity, the agreement containing a condition such that, if the condition is met, the entity agrees to take the action.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the agreement is entered prior to receipt of pledges, and wherein the agreement specifies a time limitation related to payment of the price.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the time limitation comprises the first deadline for receiving pledges.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the plurality of pledges are made by at least one bidder, and the at least one bidder may set an expiration time for his pledge.
6. The method of claim 2, wherein the condition is that the total amount of pledges equals a predetermined price.
7. The method of claim 5, wherein a bidder's pledge results in a transfer of value units from the bidder if the condition is met prior to expiration of the pledge.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the entity is the holder of an intellectual property right, and the cause is the extinguishment of the intellectual property right.
9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of:

entering an agreement with the entity, the agreement containing a condition, such that the entity agrees to allow the extinguishment of the intellectual property right if the condition is met.
10. The method of claim 8, wherein the extinguishment of the intellectual property right is effectuated by transferring the intellectual property right to a second entity, wherein the second entity has represented that it will not enforce the intellectual property right.
11. The method of claim 8, wherein the intellectual property right is a copyright right.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the copyright right is the right of electronic distribution of a copyrighted work.
13. The method of claim 11, wherein the copyright right is the right to reproduce a copyrighted work.
14. The method of claim 11, wherein the copyright right is the right to make a derivative work of a copyrighted work.
15. The method of claim 9, wherein the intellectual property right is a patent right.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein the patent right is a license to manufacture a product for a particular purpose.
17. A method of increasing the availability of creative works to the public comprising:
- a) providing a site on a computer network for providing access to creative works;
 - b) inducing a rightholder, having a set of rights in a creative work, to relinquish a subset of his rights in a creative work;
 - c) providing means for storing the creative work in a manner accessible to a user visiting the site; and
 - d) providing access to the creative work to a user visiting said site.
18. The method of claim 17, further comprising holding a cooperative auction to raise funds for inducing the rightholder to relinquish the subset of his rights.

19. A method for realizing value from an intellectual property right comprising:

specifying a price for the right;

specifying a duration for a cooperative auction;

putting the work up for cooperative auction at said price and duration;

receiving pledges; and

if the aggregate value of the pledges exceeds the price, extinguishing the intellectual property right.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the intellectual property right is a copyright right.